New Passport Policy

1839. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Govemment have recently announced a new policy to issue passports for twenty years at a time;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the response received from the public thereto;

(c) the names of countries which issue passports for twenty years at a time;

(d) whether character verification is to be done after twenty years at the time of renewal of the passport; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the steps proposed to be taken to ensure that the passport is issued after due character verification?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On 9th September, 1996 the Govemment announced a new policy to issue passports for 20 years at a time which has received a favourable response from the public. However, in view also of the continued interest and demand for obtaining 10 year validity passports, this policy was modified and an option was given to applicants to apply for either a 10 year validity passport on payment of the existing fee of Rs. 300 or a 20 years validity passport on payment fee of Rs. 600.

(c) As per information available with Government the only countries which issue a passport valid for 20 years at a time are Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. However, they restrict this facility to persons over 45 years of age.

(d) and (e) After expiry of the validity of a passport issued for 10 years or 20 years, a new passport is to be issued without prior police verification, though after internal checks to ascertain that there is nothing on the records of the Passport Office which would make the applicant ineligible for holding a passport. Police verification is commenced, but report not awaited while issuing a passport. Subsequently, if adverse/negative report is received from the police authorities, the passport would get impounded/revoked under the relevant provisions of the Passport Act, 1967.

Extradition Treaty with America

1840. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Govemment had any proposal to sign Extradition Treaty with the United States of America;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the treaty has been signed;

(d) if so, when; and

(e) the other steps being taken by both the countries to combat terrorism including narco-terrorism and drug trafficking?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) to (d) India and the US initiated formal talks in 1993 on the proposal to sign a new Extradition Treaty. Two rounds of talks were held, from 28 September—1 October, 1993 in New Delhi and from 19—21 October, 1994 in Washington. Negotiations have since been concluded. India and the US are presently in the course of processing the text of Extradition Treaty for signature under their respective systems. The draft of the new Extradition Treaty addresses the need felt by both Governments to revise existing extradition arrangements, keeping in view modem trends in extradition law and practice.

(e) Cooperation between India and the US on counterterrorism involves exchange of information, training and mutual assistance for investigations and prosecutions. India and the US also have a Joint Working Group on Narcotics which meets annually. Stepped-up interaction between Narcotics/Revenue officials on both sides has helped